

Bavarian News

Vol 2. Nr. 24

Grafenwoehr, Hohenfels and Vilseck

December 13, 2006

Jan. 17 town hall mandatory for some *AF, NAF, LNs, GS military supervisors required to attend*

U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr

On Jan. 17, the U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr will host a town hall to introduce the National Security Personnel System to all U.S. Appropriated Fund employees.

While this town hall will be open to the public, attendance will be mandatory for appropriated fund personnel. In addition, local national, non-appropriated fund, and military supervisors of GS civilian employees will also be required to attend.

The Army is in the midst of its greatest

transformation in more than four decades, and our civilian workforce is one of the key components to its success.

Just like our Soldiers, civilians are becoming quicker, more agile, and better able to adapt to a changing environment.

A vital element of Army change is the new human resources system – NSPS.

Part of the fiscal 2004 National Defense Authorization Act, this new system will offer us new tools to manage and shape the workforce and will provide more flexibility and better rewards for hard work and ingenuity.

More specifically, NSPS will attract and retain

top talent while promoting high performance.

Secondly, it will allow for greater employee, supervisor, and leadership accountability.

Finally, it will allow Army organizations greater flexibility in responding to mission changes, workforce shaping, work assignments, and pay setting.

While subject matter experts from USAREUR will outline NSPS in more detail at the town hall, some of the things that will not change under NSPS are as follows:

- Merit system principles
- Rules against prohibited personnel practices

- Whistleblower protection
- Veterans preference rights
- Benefits (retirement, health, life, etc.)
- Antidiscrimination laws
- Fundamental due process
- Overseas entitlements
- Training
- Leave and work schedules
- Fair Labor Standards Act

NSPS has been endorsed by the Army's senior leadership – CONUS and here in Europe.

Two town hall sessions—from 10 a.m. to noon and 1 - 3 p.m.—will be available to the Grafenwoehr and Vilseck communities at the Tower Theater Jan. 17.

Attendees will receive details on how the new system works, why it will work, and how it will help the Army meet the challenges of the future.

Tis the season



The Hohenfels Elementary Chorus, led by Deborah Barrows, provides festive entertainment during the installation's 2006 tree lighting ceremony Dec. 3.

photos by Gerry Arbios

Hohenfels kicks off Christmas season

by GARRY BARROWS

Special to the Bavarian News

The holiday season officially arrived at Hohenfels Dec. 3, with the lighting of the community Christmas tree in front of the Main Chapel.

More than 300 people attended the annual tree lighting ceremony with co-hosts U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels Commander Lt. Col. James V. Matheson and Joint Multinational Readiness Center Commander Col. Thomas S. Vandal.

Helping Vandal to throw the switch to light the tree were community members Halliah

Tolbert and Lynn Marie Thompson.

The crowd was entertained with songs by the Hohenfels Elementary Chorus, directed by Deborah Barrows, and a special visit by Santa and Mrs. Claus.

The First Armored Division Band, under the direction of Chief Warrant Officer Gary W. Dorrell, continued the entertainment with a concert in the post theatre, providing the audience with many seasonal favorites.

The festivities came to an end with a holiday reception in the Community Activities Center, where Santa made a return appearance and invited the boys and girls to tell him what they wanted for Christmas.



Hohenfels youth gave Santa their wish lists during the celebration.

Community joins effort, builds cafe for Soldiers

by JODI WARD

Staff writer

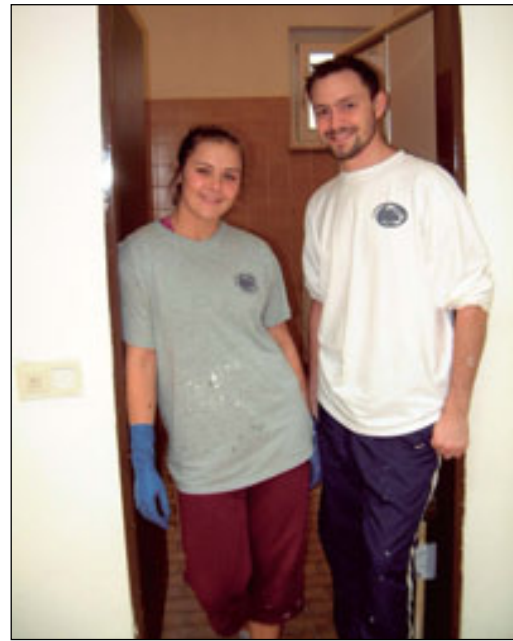
Beginning in January, area Soldiers will have a new place to hang out, thanks to Chaplain (Maj.) Samuel Lee and community members who pitched in to help transform Bldg. 301 into a fashionable coffee house.

Prior to the renovation, the building—located at the back end of the PX parking lot—was a vacant space slated to become a bank.

Due to lack of funding for the bank construction, however, Lee was granted permission to turn it into a place for Soldiers looking for somewhere to relax and have fun without the pressures of drinking.

It may not be a Starbucks, but through donations, the Hospitality House will offer free

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Courtesy photo

Over 90 community volunteers showed up to help build the cafe.

Know where to turn to fight the holiday blues this season

by JODI WARD

Staff writer

For most people the holiday season is a fun time of year filled with parties, celebrations, and social gatherings with family and friends.

But for many, especially Soldiers and family members stationed far from home, it can be a time of loneliness, self-reflection, and anxiety.

"We're expecting to see a spike (in clinic visits)," said Mental Health Non-

Commissioned Officer Sgt. Esther Taumomoa, "because a lot of the service members coming in seem to be fairly young, fairly new to the Army, and for many it's their first time being away



Taumomoa

from home.

"Plus, many of them may not have leave because they took block leave before coming here to Germany," she said.

Taumomoa said Soldiers and family members who adapt well, or who have formed bonds with people in the community, tend to fare better during the holidays than those who have trouble adjusting to change and have difficulty forming new relationships.

According to the National Mental

Health Association, factors contributing to the holiday blues include:

- the inability to be with loved ones
- financial strain
- unrealistic expectations
- memories of past holidays
- change in daily routine
- change in diet
- overall added demands of shopping, parties, and house guests.

For some, even changes in light and temperature can cause mental

strain. Sunlight affects the seasonal activities of humans, just as it does with animals. Some people who experience depression due to these changes have been diagnosed with Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Combined with dealing with holiday stress and cold weather, the traditionally joyous season can be quite challenging for some. According to the National Mental Health

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Q&A

How did you do most of your holiday shopping?



Deedee Koch
"I do a little of everything. My husband likes L.L. Bean, so I shop online for him."



Spc. Monica Williams
"I do all of my shopping online. It's just more convenient. Here you can't just go to a store and find what you need."



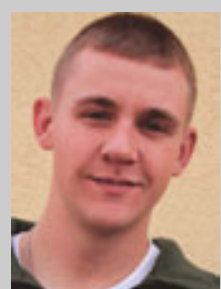
Micheline Hearn-Holmes
"I'd say I do half online, half in stores. I've bought a lot of German gifts on the economy. Some things I buy online because I can't find them anywhere else."



CWO 3 Chuck Minton
"I do my shopping mostly at the PX and at stores on the economy, but I do order some gift cards online."



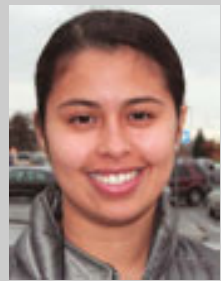
Kimberly Blatchford
"I come to the PX for a few things, order online what I can't get here, and the kids are getting some of the toys they like from stores on the economy."



Spc. Christian Hipsley
"Mostly online. Sometimes I don't have time to get to the stores to shop."



Ashley Bridges
"I probably do 75 percent of my shopping online and then the rest in stores. Living here in Germany, it's just easier to shop online."



Yanet Roman
"I do a lot of shopping online because I can't find everything I need at the PX."

Command Message

Despite many challenges, 2006 proves successful for garrison

Rather than focus on three or four things of general community interest in the last edition of the year, I will instead review the past year: Grafenwoehr 2006—A Year In Review:

It has been a good year for the community with incoming personnel, expansion of facilities, and a host of well attended community events.

We started off the year welcoming back the 94th Engineer Battalion after another year-long rotation to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

After their well-deserved leave, we marshaled our forces to efficiently speed the battalion on its way to Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. At about the same time we welcomed 12th Chemical Company from Kitzingen (Germany), the 69th Signal Battalion from Wuerzburg (Germany), and moved the final elements of the 18th CSB from Vilseck to Grafenwoehr. All of this was done in preparation for the arrival of the 2d Stryker Cavalry Regiment.

Over a three-month period, we brought the entire regiment to Vilseck. Well over 3,500 Soldiers and their families now call our community their home. Of course while all of this was going on, we continued to say farewell to units deploying to the Global War On Terrorism and gladly welcome home those who have served their latest tour of duty.

On the building front, we continued

forward with the military construction, or MILCON, predominately in Grafenwoehr, to meet the USAREUR goal of stationing theater-enabling commands in Grafenwoehr.

We finished three more one-plus-one billets, additional motor pool facilities, and opened—with the command sergeant major of the Army and a Soldier newly redeployed from Iraq—our brand new fitness facility in March.

We conducted the groundbreaking ceremony for the new PX and commissary due to open in fall 2007. We also stood up the temporary middle school in learning cottages that we will use until the Netzberg School is completed. On the social side of the house, we celebrated our 49th German-American Volksfest, IMCOM-E boxing, softball, 10-miler competitions, and our Native American, Hispanic, and Asian heritage events.

All of these events were conducted in and around the yearly social events our German hosts so ably host. You are never bored in our community but instead must choose which event you want to attend.

We also hosted the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, Boy Scout, and Purple Camps this summer in camps around our training area.

And Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels remain premier sites to visit in Germany. We hosted a number of dignitaries from U.S. Congressmen and their staffs, senior military leaders, and high ranking German officials. All were interested in where and how the money they appropriated was being spent.

With all the "good" that came to our community, we certainly had our challenges

too. We started this year with no budget and worked under a continual budget resolution until February 2006.

Once we received our budget, we quickly determined we would run out of funds by July. This meant a belt tightening for all of Installation Management Command and a slow down of contracts and personnel hiring.

We stretched our dollars, extended "in-between times" for contract services and made it to the end of the year. In fact, in September we finally received enough money to execute long-term projects like the renovation of the Hohenfels movie theater and combat storage sheds for 2SCR.

We had our challenges but in many ways were much better off than the rest of Europe. In fact, if you talk to my peers, Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels get all the money, and they are barely surviving. All I know is there is no better place to live than in our communities.

So 2006 was a challenging year. We did not have enough money and probably won't ever have enough. Next year will equally be as tough. We will operate under another continuing budget resolution until the new Congress passes the budget. Rest assured, however, that we continue to squeeze every penny out of our budget to continue to make Grafenwoehr the best place to live and serve in Germany.

*Col. Brian T. Boyle
Commander, U.S. Army
Garrison Grafenwoehr*

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus

Eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon wrote a letter to the editor of the New York's Sun, and the quick response was printed as an unsigned editorial Sept. 21, 1897.

The work of veteran newsmen Francis Pharcellus Church has since become history's most reprinted newspaper editorial, appearing in part or whole in dozens of languages in books, movies, and other editorials, and on posters and stamps.

"DEAR EDITOR: I am 8 years old.
"Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.
"Papa says, 'If you see it in THE SUN it's so.'
"Please tell me the truth; is there a Santa Claus?
"VIRGINIA O'HANLON.
"115 WEST NINETY-FIFTH STREET."

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds.

All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they

abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias.

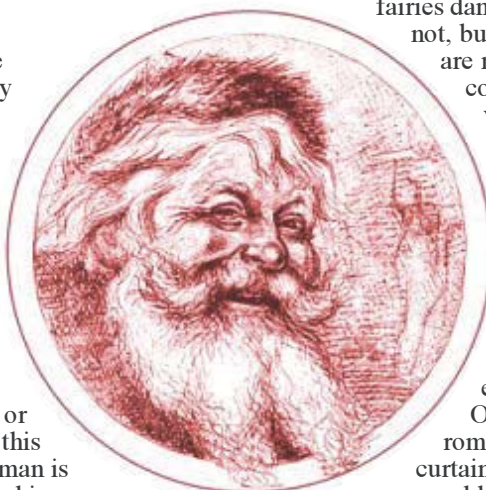
There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove?

Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see

fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world. **You tear apart the baby's rattle** and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real?

Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding. No Santa Claus! Thank GOD! He lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.



Military Spouses Christmas reduced to shopping lists?



JACKIE ECKHART
On the Homefront

My mom is crafty. She doesn't begin her holiday assault with the first piece of pumpkin pie. She has been known to hold her guns until an hour or so after Thanksgiving dinner.

Even if I am not living overseas, Mom seems to know the exact moment I have the refrigerator door propped open with my knee, a swipe of pie on my tongue, and the Reddi Wip nozzle poised over my open mouth.

"So when will you get me your Christmas lists?" she asks innocently. "It's never too early to start on the holidays!"

I try not to choke. Because right up until that minute, I think we are still in the Turkey Zone and Christmas is comfortably far, far away.

This year I didn't even get my pie first. This year mom started asking for the Christmas list the day after Halloween.

Not only did she want the list, but she hoped that whatever we wanted would come from Sears, Barnes & Noble, Target, or Land's End. She claimed she wanted our returns to be easy. I say she didn't want to park at the mall.

My mother-in-law was not too far behind. I swear she was delighted that I forgot to write a thank you note for my birthday gift. That way she could email me to make sure the package arrived—and drop in a little message that the Christmas list would be welcome any time.

Now I love Christmas as much as the next guy, but the demand for the Christmas wish list makes me feel very un-Christmasy indeed.

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Grafenwoehr • Hohenfels • Vilseck

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What Right Looks Like

Soldiers encouraged to be, know, enforce the standard

To understand how standards and discipline are linked, you have to begin with the basic premise of how we grow sergeants in our Army.

The Sergeant Major of the Army refers to this as a basic three step process.

Step one: Establish a standard.

Army Regulation 670-1, Wear of the Uniform, is a standard that tells us how to wear the uniform, items on the uniform, and all the accessories. It guides our uniform in the field. The items we wear on the uniform or carry with us is a standard usually in accordance with a unit standard operating procedure.

The preventive maintenance checks and services we perform on our Humvee in the motor pool are done to a standard outlined in the operator's manual.

A patrol of Soldiers coming off mission in Baghdad, Iraq, clear their weapons upon entering their base camp in accordance with the standard published in the Weapons Handling Procedures developed by the Army's Combat Readiness Center.

Now with an understanding of standards, **step two is put someone in charge** of enforcing the standards. This is where the sergeant is now responsible for his or her piece of the Army, those three or four Soldiers.

It is the sergeant who conducts daily inspections of Soldiers' uniforms. It is the sergeant who conducts pre-combat checks of his or her Soldiers' arms and equipment before going out on patrol.

It is the sergeant who supervises the preventive maintenance checks and service of the Humvee during maintenance periods, and it is the sergeant who over-watches the Soldiers coming off patrol to ensure all have cleared their weapons to standard.

Step three in growing our leaders is to hold the sergeant accountable. This is where the more senior leaders above the sergeant have their responsibility. To see what is being done to standard, senior leaders have to inspect.

A Soldier on patrol missing a piece of equipment means it was missed during PCCs by the Sergeant and obviously missed by a more senior leader during the pre-combat inspection. This same analogy extends to every standard we set for our units and our sergeants to enforce.

“We have always said when a more senior leader demonstrates a lesser standard; this demonstration now becomes the new standard. The demonstration of a lesser standard goes far deeper than just setting a new standard; it circumvents the authority of the sergeant.”

So for the more senior leaders above the rank of sergeant you must always remember your role in growing sergeants. Lead by example by demonstrating the standard in all that you do. This leading by example empowers the sergeant to enforce standards on their small piece of the Army.

We have always said when a more senior leader demonstrates a lesser standard; this demonstration now becomes the new standard.

The demonstration of a lesser standard goes far deeper than just setting a new standard; it circumvents the authority of the sergeant.

I have learned over the years that the two basic building blocks for a sergeant to establish his or her authority and establish discipline in the organization begin with basic uniform and saluting standards.

In every case where the sergeant stops enforcing fundamental standards and senior leaders do not hold him accountable, the enforcement of standards in other areas begins to slip.

Shortcuts in performing PMCS begin to become routine. Soldiers stop wearing seatbelts, PCCs are not performed in detail, complacency begins to set in and sergeants stop making on the spot corrections.

The importance of the squad and platoon leadership in establishing standards and holding sergeants accountable is critical to the performance of the organization.

When you walk into an organization as an outsider and you see everyone in the same uniform, vehicle load plans are organized, basic fundamental drills are performed as routine, and you learn a lot about the unit's discipline.

You know as an outsider that standards are established, everyone knows the standard, and there is a leader in charge.

Recent changes in regulations and policy regarding the wear of the uniform.

In an attempt to get the word out on some of these changes, the Army publishes All Army Activities, or ALARACT, Messages regularly.

In these messages approved changes to the regulations and approved guidance are communicated from Department of The Army to major commands.

Some recent changes and common violations of existing regulations and/or guidance are listed below:

■ The ACU digitized pattern fabric covers with or without SSI, Shoulder Sleeve Insignia-Former Wartime Service, and U.S. flag insignia (full color or subdued) are not authorized to be worn over the ACU hook and loop-faced pads already provided on the ACU shirt. In other words... it is unauthorized to cover up excess Velcro on your ACU sleeve.

■ The black or foliage green ACU fleece can be worn as an outer garment with the ACU, Battle Dress Uniform, and Desert Battle Dress Uniform, unless otherwise directed by the commander.

■ Pens/pencils worn in the pen/pencil slots on the ACU coat can be exposed.

■ Wear of the black, ACU universal pattern, and foliage green gym bags, civilian rucksacks or other similar civilian bags while in uniform is authorized. In other words... No other color other than what has been mentioned is authorized.

■ Non-Subdued SSI (S) are not authorized to be worn on utility uniforms as a SSI or SSI-FWTS. Leaders will ensure Soldiers comply immediately.

There are no exceptions to policy currently approved authorizing wear of any non-subdued SSI on utility uniforms. In other words... the 1st Infantry Division (Big Red One) color

patches are not authorized for wear on the ACU!

■ Combat, special skill, and identification badges are not authorized to be worn on the ACU in the field or within deployed environments.

■ The ACU patrol cap is worn with the ACU in field environments when the Kevlar helmet is not worn, on work details, or in other environments where the wear of the beret is impractical as determined by the commander. In other words... the patrol cap is not authorized to be worn in the PX, food courts, out running errands etc..

■ The gray (foliage green) micro fleece cap replaced the black knit cap in the fiscal 2006 clothing bag. There hasn't been a wear-out-date established for the black knit cap. Both are authorized to be worn with the Individual Physical Fitness Uniform.

■ Earphones, headsets, Ipods, and Walkmans, etc., are not authorized for wear with the IPFU, the only exception is in a physical fitness facility - In other words... You can't wear them outside running. An additional area that falls in the category of standards and discipline is proper flag etiquette. As far as standards of respect go for our nation's colors Title 4, United States Code, Chapter 1 states the following:

■ Reveille and Retreat: Conduct during hoisting, lowering or passing

of flag. During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, all present except those in uniform should face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart.

Those present in uniform should render the military salute. When not in uniform, men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Foreign nationals should stand at attention. - In other words... when driving and Reveille and Retreat is played, all should stop their vehicles, get out and render proper courtesy.

As leaders, we must always do the right thing. When you find yourself wavering on enforcing the standard, remember the following quotation by James Warner Bellah:

“A dead Soldier who has given his life because of the failure of his leader is a dreadful sight before God.

“Like all dead Soldiers, he was tired before he died, and undoubtedly dirty, and possibly frightened to his soul; and there he is on top of all of that... never to see his homeland.

“Don't be the leader who failed to instruct him properly, who failed to lead him well.

“Burn the midnight oil that you may not, in later years, look at your hands and find his blood still red upon them.”

The bottom line - “Be the standard, know the standard, and enforce the standard.”

Train to Win!

Thanks to parents for making ‘Read for 2007’ a CDC success

On Friday, over 30 children from the Grafenwoehr Child Development Center became part of Scholastic's 7th Annual Reading Campaign encouraging children over the world to celebrate the joy of reading.

Scholastic Read For 2007 is a worldwide initiative in which millions of children, parents, and teachers around the globe take a day to celebrate the importance and joy of reading.

Last year, more than 1 million children and 24,000 teachers—in all 50 U.S. states and more than 37 countries internationally — participated in Read For 2006.

This year Grafenwoehr CDC was one of five programs from Germany that participated in Read for 2007. Children from the full-day and



part-day preschool classrooms, as well as children from the afterschool kindergarten classroom, at the Grafenwoehr CDC were delighted to have a day of special visiting parent readers as well as Mrs. Santa Claus, who came over as a special visitor from the Grafenwoehr Library.

The children would like to extend a special thanks to the following

parents who came in to read:

- Teresa Estes ~ Isabella and Preston's mom
- Sherica Ferguson ~ Xi'an's mom
- Sgt. Tamika Lachell Hodge ~ Jalacia's mom
- Sgt. Reina Norwood ~ Jay Ronald's mom
- Sgt. Able Razzo ~ Brandon's dad
- Mariel Reyes ~ Regina's mom
- Staff Sgt. Israel Walker ~ Tiara's dad

To see the world map and learn more about the joys of reading, visit www.scholastic.com/ReadFor2007.

Elizabeth Powers
Grafenwoehr CDC

Joy of Christmas making loved ones happy

Continued From Page 2

For one, I'm not thinking about Christmas yet. I'm not 7 years old poring over the Sears catalogue in August marking up an entire notebook with every Barbie item I still need. Coming up with a list now isn't about getting stuff down. Instead it has the air of thinking stuff up.

For two, I don't actually know what I want until the week before Christmas. It is then that I realize that I must have a Calphalon pan that is exactly the size meant for one grilled cheese sandwich. It is only when I pass by a display of red wallets on Dec. 23 that I am actually reminded that I need one.

Which is so typical, I know. But most importantly, I hate to be rushed on the production of this list because I know my mom and my MIL better every year. I know that my mom hates to buy CD's, DVD's, computer games, computer accessories or anything that has to

do with Demon Television.

She can't stand to buy online. She says she doesn't mind gift cards, but secretly she wants to touch something. Wrap something. Imagine a kid in Batman pajamas. My mama ain't happy unless she spends half of December in the festive line at the post office.

On the other hand, my mother-in-law lives in a mall-free town. She has plenty of big box retailers which would make toy buying easy, but she doesn't quite approve of getting more Batman figures or duplicate Thomas the Tank Engines.

She thinks the kids have enough already. So think up something else, won't you, dear?

My MIL also has this uncanny habit from year to year of giving you a gift you wouldn't have thought of yourself, but you wanted all the same. Once she bought me this DVD of an obscure English movie "Cold Comfort Farm." It's one of my favorite movies of all time now. I

turn it on once a month to cheer myself up.

But would I have put it on a list? Never. I wouldn't want to hamstring the master with a list if she gets a great idea.

Which is why the list itself is so difficult. Because most of all I want my mother—and my mother-in-law for that matter—to be happy with this process. To take some pleasure in it. To feel connected and accomplished and, yes, even festive with their shopping.

Producing the right list is part and parcel of being in the sisterhood of women—understanding that the joy of Christmas is picturing ourselves making the people we love feel happy, which is a pretty big order indeed.

A military wife for 19 years, Jacey Eckhart is a syndicated columnist from CinCHouse.com and author of "The Homefront Club" (Naval Institute Press 2004).

Hohenfels ICE League			
November 2006			
	Wins	Loses	% Win
1 Sunrise Lodge	35	0	1.000
2 Security Office (S2)	17	0	1.000
3 Drivers Testing	15	0	1.000
4 Property Book Office	15	0	1.000
5 Turnbull Library	15	0	1.000
6 In and Out Processing (CPF)	12	0	1.000
7 Education Center	5	1	0.833
8 Community Mail Room (CMR)	4	1	0.800
9 Child Youth Services (CYS)	6	3	0.667
10 Community Activity Center (CAC)	6	4	0.600
11 AAFES	2	4	0.333
12 Gyms (Post & Fitness)	2	4	0.333
13 Health Clinic	3	7	0.300
14 USAG-H HQ	2	6	0.250
15 DoDDs	1	4	0.200

NCO Academy instructors vie for award

Story and photo by DAVE MELANCON

USAREUR Public Affairs

Five top Soldiers from U.S. Army Europe's 7th Army Noncommissioned Officer Academy found themselves in students' boots during the school's Instructor of the Year competition at Grafenwoehr Nov. 29 -30.

The annual face-off pits the best of the academy's 40-member cadre against one another for Warrior Leader Course instructor honors.

Sgt. 1st Class Leigh Perry, academy training chief, said the challenge is based on the USAREUR Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition, which itself is administered by academy NCOs.

"We just scale it down for us," Perry said.

Long before sunup on the competition's first day, the five had already tested their muscles and minds during two events, a pre-dawn Army Physical Fitness Test and a closed-book written examination.

Competitors tackled the same exam questions given to WLC students, but the similarity ended there, said Sgt. 1st Class Val Robinson, academy test control officer.

While WLC students have two hours and available notes during an exam, the instructors had only 30 minutes and sharpened pencils to complete the 40-question test.

Following that early-morning round, the competitors faced a question-and-answer session with the school's senior leaders.

For some, this proved to be the most challenging part of the two-day competition.

"I have not been before a board in more than a year," said Staff Sgt. John Brear, A Company's representative. "They are throwing all of these questions at you, but you have to maintain your professionalism and answer with tact."

Panel members beset participants with questions — some deliberately misleading — that covered topics from basic infantry tactics



Staff Sgt. Harley Jhanson, A Company, 7th Army NCO Academy instructor, presents a class on risk management to a panel of the academy's senior NCOs during the school's Instructor of the Year competition Nov. 29-30.

and land navigation to the highpoints and details of the academy's 57-year history.

"I was trying to find out more about their presence and communications skills," said Command Sgt. Maj. Erik R. Frey, academy commandant. "We tried to put them under a bit of stress and tried to confuse them with a few curveballs."

While most of the competition focused on common Soldier tasks, the instructors also had to demonstrate teaching proficiency during a classroom presentation segment — but instead of lecturing a typical WLC class of aspiring or junior sergeants, the contestants faced a "class" of six senior NCOs.

The session tested the instructors' speaking and class-preparation skills, and their ability to

think on their feet, Frey noted. Luck of the draw determined which topic each instructor presented: risk assessment, preventive medicine or after-action reviews.

"The sergeants we instruct are at the top of their game; many have just returned from Iraq," Frey said. "They quickly will know if (an instructor is) tap-dancing around the right answers."

The classes had to meet teaching guidelines established by the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, but the competitors were allowed — and somewhat encouraged — to infuse their personal teaching styles and personalities into their presentations.

"Conducting a class in front of the commandant, first sergeants and the chief of

training is totally different than teaching in front of 20 students," said Staff Sgt. Willis Heck, B Company.

"When you are with your students, you get into a comfort zone and you start hammering away," he said.

Classes finished, competitors tackled an 11-station obstacle course to wrap up the first day of competition.

The following day stretched muscles with seven situational training — or STX — lanes that tested the instructors' skills in combat first aid, tactical movement, reacting to direct and indirect fire and weapon skills.

Competitors each carried a 25-pound rucksack, body armor, helmet, weapon and ammunition over a 10-kilometer course carved from Grafenwoehr's training area.

Staff Sgt. Luis Castellanos, C Company, described the event as a cross between a marathon and the "Amazing Race" television show, saying, "The distances between stations took a lot out of me and the other competitors."

Moreover, the lanes are an individual event, he said. "There are no coaches, no one backing you up. It's just what you know."

Roughly six grueling hours after STX started, the competitors finished, making their way back to the academy, stowing their gear, recalling the last two day's events — and already contemplating future competition.

"We should have it more often," said Brear while securing his M-4 carbine. "All of us learned something. And, if we didn't learn, then it helped tighten up our shot groups on things they have not used in a long time."

"Next year is going to get tougher and tougher, but I'm ready to do it again," added Heck.

(Editor's note: See the Jan. 10 issue of the Bavarian News to find out who won the 2006 competition.)

Guardsmen prep for Kosovo mission at Hohenfels

Story and photo by Spc.

STEPHEN PROCTOR

17th Public Affairs Detachment

After months of training, Task Force Red Dragon stands ready to promote and enforce safety and security during Kosovo Force Rotation 8.

TF Red Dragon consists of Able Co., 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment from the Massachusetts Army National Guard; Bravo Co.; Charlie Co. and Headquarters and Headquarters Co. of the 116th Brigade Combat Team from the Virginia Army National Guard.

Since August 2006, TF Red Dragon has been training for KFOR 8 along with other 29th ID units.

They began the mobilization process at Camp Atterbury, Ind., and concluded with a mission readiness exercise in Hohenfels, Germany.

"At Hohenfels, we've had training on riot control, reconnaissance patrols, and security patrols," said 2nd Lt. James Covington, Bravo Co., TF Red Dragon. But the KFOR mission



KFOR Soldiers practice riot control in Hohenfels Oct. 28.

is about more than foot patrols and riot control, it is also about connecting with the people of Kosovo.

"We also learned how to get to know the people and how to talk to them through an interpreter," said Covington. "We have to be sensitive to the culture of the Kosovo people to

make sure we're helping to ease tensions, and not adding to them."

After more than two months of training, Soldiers of TF Red Dragon are ready for their mission.

Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Moore said, "We're fully prepared and ready to perform our mission."

Commander's Letter

The Soldiers of KFOR 8 trained in Germany at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center for several weeks in October and November as part of their final preparations to assume authority for the Multi-National Task Force (East) mission in Kosovo, Operation Joint Guardian.

The JMRC is a world-class training center that has the ability to stress a unit that is getting ready to deploy into a theatre of operations. Our Soldiers have experienced almost every possible mission set that they will see in Kosovo, and I am confident that we are prepared to do our mission.

The Soldiers of the 29th are highly motivated and well led. Here at JMRC the proof of their commitment to our mission is evident. Most of our Soldiers have never experienced the full impact of their capabilities, but during the eight-day Mission Rehearsal Exercise they have been given that opportunity.

Everyone in this task force is excited about our peace-enforcement mission and getting the chance to make a positive difference in the lives of the people of Kosovo. As always, I can't say enough about how important our families are to what we are doing. Without their support, we wouldn't be able to do the things that we do.

Our training here at JMRC is the final step of a process that began months ago.

We have come from all over the country, and we represent the National Guard, the Army Reserve and active Army. While where we come from is important, it is more important that we are now functioning as a single unit, focused on the mission ahead.

I want to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication. I look forward to working with everyone as we begin our mission in Kosovo.

Brig. Gen. Douglas B. Earhart
Commander of KFOR 8

HERO Act expands IRA eligibility for deployed service members

USAREUR Public Affairs

Service members and their families tend to have a few more rules to master than the average American when it comes to tax time: which allowances are taxable? Are they qualified for a combat-zone tax exemption, and if so, for how much of their income? What about a reenlistment bonus earned while deployed but not paid until redeployment — is it taxable?

This tax season, another question will likely be high on a Soldier's list: what is the HERO Act, and how can it work for me?

The HERO Act

The answer, according to the Internal Revenue Service, is that members of the military members serving in Iraq, Afghanistan and other combat zones can now put money into an individual retirement account, even if they received tax-free combat pay.

Under the Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunities Act, signed into law on Memorial Day, service members can now count tax-free combat pay when determining whether they qualify to contribute to either a Roth or traditional IRA.

Before this change, military members whose earnings came entirely from tax-free combat pay were generally barred from using IRAs to save for retirement.

"The HERO act is one more way to let our fighting forces in combat areas know that we support them," said IRS commissioner Mark W. Everson. "This is a good way for people serving in combat zones to save more of their earnings for retirement."

Additionally, the HERO Act allows service members who received tax-free combat pay in either 2004 or 2005 to go back and make IRA contributions for those years.

Those eligible have until May 28, 2009, to make these retroactive contributions.

IRA contributions

For those under 50, the IRA contribution limit was \$3,000 for 2004 and \$4,000 for 2005. For those 50 and over, the limit was \$3,500 for 2004 and \$4,500 for 2005.

For the current tax year, the IRA contribution limit is \$4,000 for those under age 50 and \$5,000 for those 50 and over.

Roth IRA contributions are not deductible, but distributions, usually after retirement, are

normally tax-free. Income limits and other special rules apply. Contributions to a traditional IRA are often, though not always, deductible, and distributions are generally taxable.

Deductible or not, contributions to a traditional IRA must be reported on the return for the year made.

Deductible contributions are claimed on Form 1040, 1040A or 1040NR. Nondeductible contributions are reported on Form 8606, which is normally attached to one of these individual return forms.

If a return has already been filed for a particular year, contributions should be reported on an amended return, Form 1040x.

Depending upon the circumstances, military personnel who choose to put money into a traditional IRA for 2004 or 2005 may qualify for additional tax refunds.

Tax assistance

The Tax Program is a critical quality-of-life program that saves Soldiers, civilians and their families millions of dollars annually.

Last year, U.S. Army, Europe Tax Assistance Offices processed approximately 41,650 state and federal returns, saving clients an estimated

\$6 million in tax preparation fees and achieving approximately \$37.4 million in tax refunds.

"This year, our Tax Assistance Offices may be even busier due to numerous redeployments of Soldiers.

Therefore, the mission of Tax Assistance Offices this season will be to assist with the current year's returns. Clients who have HERO Act IRA contributions for previous years' tax returns should contact their local Tax Assistance Office for additional information," said Lt. Col. Jeff Pedersen, chief, Military and Civil Law Division, USAREUR Office of the Judge Advocate.

According to Pedersen, Legal Assistance Offices throughout USAREUR are already planning for the 2006 tax season. Tax Assistance Offices will publicize opening dates, locations and hours of operation after the holidays. Most offices open once W-2s are released.

For tax tips and more information on issues affecting uniformed taxpayers, go to www.irs.gov and enter the keyword "military" in the search field.

Some information for this article was drawn from IRS press releases.

Temporary employees needed now in USAREUR post offices

by **Spc. MATTHIS CHIROUX**
USAREUR Public Affairs

Are you a Department of Defense family member looking to earn extra holiday cash? If so, Army Post Offices throughout Europe have 55 temporary GS-4 slots they need to fill immediately.

The U.S. Army, Europe Postal Operations Directorate is authorized to hire 71 temporary workers to assist with the increased flux of mail centered around the holidays. But so far, only 16 of those vacancies have been filled.

“We need to fill these positions as quickly as possible. We encourage anyone interested to immediately contact their local APO,” said Art Veseth, chief of plans and programs

for the USAREUR Postal Operations Directorate. “No postal experience is required.”

Hires will receive training on mail sorting, routing and security, and will assist current post office employees with ensuring mail flows smoothly during this busiest time of the year.

While these positions are temporary and funded only through Jan. 6, the training and experience offered could act as a stepping stone into permanent positions, Veseth said.

“This is the time of year when things really start to ramp up,” Veseth said. “We can’t allow this to stop us from completing our mission, especially around the holiday season. Not only would temp hires be pulling a paycheck, but they’d also be doing their communities a great service.”

Stateside Army reservists, as well as USAREUR Soldiers, also are lending a hand in post offices this time of year.

“We receive help from Reserve Soldiers coming in for their ‘two weeks a year,’ as well as units that provide us with Soldiers to fill in the gaps,” Veseth said. “Volunteers also make up a good portion of our workforce.”

One temporary hire already being paid to pitch in at Heidelberg’s Patrick Henry Village said working in an Army post office is gratifying.

“I like postal work. It’s rewarding because I don’t just think I’m making a difference; I know I’m making a difference,” said Diane Jones, a temporary hire with the 566th Postal Company. “In the end, what I’m doing

is going to put a smile on someone’s face.”

Jones’ view is about as close to the mark of postal excellence as any to be heard anywhere, said Bill Hilsher, the USAREUR Postal Operations Directorate chief.

“We deliver morale one letter at a time,” Hilsher said, “and its critical we accomplish our mission during this time of year. We owe it to everyone serving over here.”

Hilsher reiterated that anyone interested in employment at a USAREUR post office this holiday season should immediately contact their local APO.

“With luck, we can have most of these positions filled in time for the rush,” he said. “Every single person is going to make a difference.”

Soldier convicted in hit-and-run case

7th Army JMTC Public Affairs

A military court in Würzburg yesterday convicted a Schweinfurt-based USAREUR Soldier of criminally negligent homicide, obstruction of justice, failure to report a traffic accident to the police and failure to render first aid after a traffic

accident.

The defendant, Warrant Officer Jose C. Cruz, formerly assigned to the 1-4 Cavalry, was acquitted of the most serious charge, involuntary manslaughter.

Cruz was tried in connection with the August 2005 hit and run death of Erwin Rudorfer on Bundestrasse 19

outside of Schweinfurt.

After a three-day trial, a military panel (jury) deliberated for approximately four hours before reaching its verdict.

Cruz faces a maximum penalty of 12 years imprisonment, a dishonorable discharge and forfeiture of all pay and allowances. Sentencing

will be today.

Capt. Matthew Kemkes and Capt. Allison Danko prosecuted the case for the United States government.

Maj. Jennifer Bottoms and Capt. Robert Fellrath, of United States Army Trial Defense Service, represented Cruz. Military judge Col. R. Peter Masterton presided.

MEDCOM wants your opinion on mental health services

Europe Region Medical Command

The U. S. Army Medical Command wants to know Soldiers’ and family members’ perceptions and experiences with the mental and behavioral health services available at installations in Europe.

The Army’s surgeon general and commander of MEDCOM believes that service members and their families deserve the highest quality healthcare - available when needed - and from trusted providers.

Therefore, a consulting firm is conducting a survey about the availability of mental healthcare services and holding focus groups to discuss the community’s awareness, usage, and opinions .

“Whether or not you have used mental or behavioral health services in the past is not important,” said Lt. Col. Gary W. Tryniszewski, director of Europe Regional MEDCOM’s Soldier and Family Support Services. “We are interested the perceptions of both users and non-users.”

BearingPoint, a private consulting firm, has the contract with MEDCOM to conduct the research. BearingPoint will make the survey available online and will hold focus group discussions at locations throughout Europe.

Tryniszewski said any thoughts and opinions expressed online or during a focus group session will be kept completely anonymous and confidential and are protected by the Privacy Act.

A focus group is a group discussion where participants get to share their opinions on a given topic.

The medical community would like to hear your opinions on mental and behavioral health care available in Army medical facilities in Europe.

“Participation in the survey or focus group is voluntary does not affect your benefits or the benefits of your family,” Tryniszewski said. If you would like to participate in the survey, go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=405082773485>

“BearingPoint Inc. is working with us to carry out the survey. If you have any problems completing the survey or have other questions about the

survey, please do not hesitate to call BearingPoint at 703.747.4011,” Tryniszewski said.

Those who would like to participate in a focus group at a nearby installation can contact Lauren Roberts at 001-703-747-6643 or e-mail her at Lauren.Roberts@bearingpoint.com. The facilities listed below have focus groups scheduled during December 2006.

■ Today and tomorrow: Vicenza Health Clinic, Bldg 113, Room 35, from noon - 1 p.m.

“Each focus group session will last approximately one hour, with breakfast or lunch provided. I encourage everyone to let their thoughts be known because it benefits everyone,” Tryniszewski said.

Grafenwoehr’s Chesser keeps a positive outlook in Iraq

Special to the Bavarian News

At a very young age, Jesse Chesser knew he wanted to serve in the military. So in 2001, while only a junior attending Pleasanton High School, Chesser joined the United States Army Reserves.

“When September 11 happened, that solidified my decision,” said Specialist Chesser, during a recent phone interview from Iraq.

The son of Eugene and Sandra Hernandez of Pleasanton, Chesser graduated from PHS in 2002.

In 2003, he became active duty.

He is now serving with the 615th Military Police Company (known as the “Bloodhounds”) out of Grafenwoehr, Germany.

Chesser was deployed to Baghdad in January of this year. The unit is teaching the local Iraqi Police force techniques to be able to conduct operations on their own.

A day for these brave men and women begins early with a hearty breakfast. In the morning, generally eggs are served. Meals later in the day consist of American fast-food places like Burger King, Popeyes and Pizza Hut, or dinner by the

Army cooks.

“Usually the food is pretty good at chow hall,” Chesser said.

Afterward, Chesser goes to the Iraqi Police station to do his job.

“Mainly we patrol the city and assist the Iraqi Police. We train them and mentor them a few hours each day,” said Chesser.

At the end of the day, Chesser retires to a two-man trailer. Although it is small, you will hear no complaints from him.

“I couldn’t ask for anything better,” Chesser said of his sleeping conditions. “I know others out there

have it much worse than I do.”

The Iraqi weather, said Chesser, is similar to that of Pleasanton. “It’s just a little hotter in Iraq.”

As for the Iraqi people he encounters, Chesser said, “some are glad we’re here and they want to get close to you, others don’t want to look at you. Most of them know little English, but they still try to talk to you for hours.”

While most tours of duty are about a year long, Chesser is not sure of how long he will remain in Iraq.

“It depends on the mission ... we’re hoping for the best,” said Chesser. “These people need our help.



(From left) Spouses Gail Vega , Kathy Jordan, and Erin Phillips prepare a sign Nov. 30 in anticipation of their husbands' redeployment. Their husbands are assigned to Delta Company, 3-58th Aviation Battalion, which arrived at the Grafenwoehr Field House Saturday after a one-year tour in Iraq.

“Each Soldier tries to show that we are right in there with them,” Chesser explained. “We are beside them. We work through the bad and keep the Iraqis looking in a positive direction.”

Specialist Chesser married the former Priscilla Castaneda, a 2004 graduate of Pleasanton High School.

On June 10, the couple welcomed their first child, a boy, whom they named Sebastian. Priscilla and son are presently living in Germany.

His family– his parents, wife and child, keep him going.

“Let them know I think about them all the time,” said Chesser. “It keeps me feeling good when I keep in contact with them.”

“I’m very proud of him,” said his mother Sandra. “He is very special and talented. I’m proud of what he’s doing for me and the country.”

Spotlight on Education



Name: Shannon Geraghty
School: Grafenwoehr Elementary

What grade/subject do you teach? Kindergarten to 5th Grade Art

Hometown? Dayton, Ohio

How long have you been a teacher? 6 years

What do you like best about teaching? Introducing art and artists to students. Watching as students create beautiful combinations of colors, lines, and shapes. Encouraging students to use their imagination and then seeing them translate that from their brain to paper.

What advice can you give students to help them succeed in school? Stop saying, “I can’t do it!” Think of a more descriptive way to express the difficulties you’re having. The better you can express your problem, the better the advice will be from your teachers, parents, and other adults that want to help you learn.

Healthy Empowerment

Dear Demetrius,

I am overweight and have been trying for months to see a difference in my “turkey wings” and tighten up the “flab” on my legs. I have been walking and taking the stairs when I can. I want to look and feel just a little bit better with more energy for myself and my family. Can you help me?

Seeking Hope in Houston, Sarah

•••••

Dear Sarah,

Increasing your walking time and amount of steps would be a great start. In addition, slowly working into a regimen of weight lifting for toning would be ideal. I know what you may be thinking because I have heard it a thousand times “Weight lifting!!? I’ll pass on the weight lifting. I don’t want to look like a man!”

Don’t worry. Simple weight lifting will not make you look manly. The women who build excessive muscle mass in many cases are lifting an extensive amount of weight, eating an extensive amount of calories, and some are taking supplements to look that way.

Send your nutrition and fitness questions to usaggnews@graf.aur.army.mil and have it published in the next Bavarian News. Demetrius J. Willis is a registered dietitian and a certified personal trainer.

Craddock takes reins of European Command

by Air Force Tech Sgt. DEVIN FISHER
Special to American Forces Press Service

Army Gen. John Craddock took the reins of U.S. European Command during a change of command ceremony at Patch Barracks Dec. 4.

Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England presided over the ceremony that transferred command to Craddock from Marine Gen. James L. Jones, who served as the EUCOM commander since Jan. 16, 2003.

“U.S. European Command remains in strong capable hands. Our nation is blessed to have a person of (Craddock’s) caliber and experience to take on this vital mantle of leadership,” England said. He added that the general’s 13 years of prior assignments in Europe will prove “invaluable” in this position.

The EUCOM commander’s responsibility spans 92 nations in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, and he commands five U.S. components: U.S. Army, Europe; U.S. Navy, Europe; U.S. Air Forces in Europe, U.S. Marine Forces, Europe; and Special Operations Command, Europe.

Craddock, who is the 14th EUCOM commander, ensured the European Command staff that their hard work has been noticed. “Your reputation for excellence and your extraordinary competence have been and continue to be an inspiration for all,” Craddock

said. “Day in and day out you provide an example of sterling professionalism to more than 90 countries.”

He said he is honored and humbled to join the European Command team. “My pledge to you is to give you full measure of effort, 100 percent every day, and to lead by example from the front.”

Craddock, who previously served as the commander of U.S. Southern Command, with headquarters in Miami, also will serve as the NATO supreme allied commander for Europe following a Dec. 7 change-of-command ceremony in Mons, Belgium.

“I won’t forget that European Command and its components have formed the backbone of the North Atlantic Alliance,” Craddock said. “Make no mistake, we will continue to work with our

partners to protect the United States and our allies in the war on terrorism while at the same time laying the foundation for peace and prosperity.”

England said Jones’ extraordinary accomplishments and successes throughout his 40-year military career will have a lasting effect and influence on the future of NATO, European Command, the Marine Corps and the countries within the European Command theater.

“Jones is a magnificent leader and a warrior statesman in the mold of the famous George C. Marshall, but most of all he is a Marine’s Marine,” England said.

“Under his leadership, (European Command) has had extraordinary success in hardcore warfighting, building and strengthening partnerships from the Balkans to the countries of Africa to Iraq and Afghanistan, to the countries of the former Soviet Union, while simultaneously transforming the command itself, moving towards a more expeditionary posture,” he continued. “All these efforts directly support the strategic vision of our nation and of our friends and allies for the transformation necessary to meet the security challenges of the 21st century.”

The deputy defense secretary also thanked the men and women of European Command for their service. “(You) stand at the front lines of the great struggle for freedom,” England said. “Thank you for your dedication, courage, service and sacrifice ... and for everything you do every day to leave a better world for our children and our grandchildren.”

Jones echoed the praise. “You have been magnificent,” he said. “You have performed during the most difficult and challenging time of change. You have gone through transformation of not only capabilities, but indeed of philosophy — one that moves towards regional understanding of the 92-country area of responsibility that we’ve been privileged to participate in.”

Jones said that in addition to reaffirming the command’s role to fight and win when required, the European Command staff has added equal importance to the value of deterrence and prevention of potential conflict and confirming



by Adam Gramarossa

Army Gen. John Craddock addresses the U.S. European Command after accepting command from Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England during a ceremony on Patch Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany, Dec. 4. Craddock, who replaces Marine Gen. James L. Jones, also assumed responsibilities as supreme allied commander in Europe from Jones in a Dec. 7 ceremony in Mons, Belgium.

the command’s commitment to help emerging democracies reach their full potential.

The general praised each of European Command’s components and the National Guard for their contribution to the “great team effort.”

Jones will retire with more than 40 years of military service after he passes his NATO command to Craddock.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff created EUCOM in 1952 to facilitate American NATO obligations by providing U.S. combat forces for the defense of Europe. The European Command’s mission

is to support and achieve U.S. interests and objectives throughout 92 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Africa and portions of the Middle East.

The command performs a variety of functions including planning for and conducting contingency operations such as noncombatant evacuations and humanitarian relief operations; providing combat-ready forces to both Allied Command Europe and other U.S. unified commands, and conducting intelligence activities and security assistance.

Several outlets available for help with holiday blues

Continued From Page 1

Association, the most difficult months for SAD sufferers are January and February, and younger people and women are at higher risk.

Recognize holiday depression

While the holiday blues are not the same as depression, holiday stressors can cause symptoms that mimic those of clinical depression.

Symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Inability to sleep or sleeping too much
- Change in appetite resulting in loss or gain

of weight

- Lethargy
- Agitation or anxiety
- Excessive or inappropriate feelings of guilt
- Diminished ability to think clearly or concentrate
- Decreased interest in things that usually bring pleasure (food, sex, etc.)

Fortunately, the holiday blues (symptoms of depression associated with the holiday season) don’t last.

The holiday blues should subside after the season is over and daily routines are resumed, said Taumomoa.

“You go through the holidays, and get back to normal,” she said.

Get help if you need it

If you or a loved one continue to experience these symptoms, or struggle with thoughts of self-harm or suicide, seek the help of an experienced mental health practitioner.

“It doesn’t hurt to call for help,” said Taumomoa. “Even if you’re overreacting, it’s better that the person and people around them are safe,” she said.

There are many options for those who want or need help. Find someone to talk to who can

help you through this difficult time.

This may include chaplains, social service personnel, Army Community Services, Family Advocacy, and your chain of command.

For those who are concerned about confidentiality, the Army One Source hotline provides professional behavioral health support 24 hours a day. The phone call will not impact one’s medical records (Overseas number: 1-800-464-81077).

Don’t let depression get the better of you this holiday season. Enjoy the festivities, but don’t forget to take care of your own well-being.

Monday ceremony to usher in Gates as new defense secretary

by JIM GARAMONE
American Forces Press Service

Robert Gates will take over as defense secretary Monday, and the department will wish current Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld farewell at a Pentagon ceremony Friday, a Defense Department spokesman announced Thursday.

Gates and Rumsfeld have met a couple of times to handle transition issues and will meet again in the coming week, spokesman Bryan Whitman told reporters last week.

Whitman also spoke about the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. He said DoD officials are looking closely at the group’s report.

“We take very seriously the recommendations that they have made (and) the thoughtfulness behind this effort,” Whitman said. “We certainly want to give it the kind of review and analysis it deserves.”

He said the coalition effort to embed trainers with Iraqi units is working well.

“Clearly, we have found that embedding trainers in Iraqi units is something that has a tremendous amount of value in terms of helping them develop,” he said.

“It is one of those areas where, for



photo by Cherie Thurlby

Robert Gates vowed to be an independent voice if confirmed as defense secretary during testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee Dec. 5.

some time now, we have been reinforcing success by adding to the number of people embedded in those units,” he said.

Some 5,000 U.S. trainers are assigned to 400 transition teams in Iraq.

These teams work down to battalion level. Local U.S. commanders augment these teams with troops from their units, Pentagon officials said.

In addition, squads of Iraqis work inside U.S. platoons in some units.

Hospitality House opening in Vilseck next month

Continued From Page 1

coffee and an array of activities to enjoy. Lee said there will be a movie room, a reading room, a gaming room, and dining area.

A room will also be designated for social gatherings (birthday or holiday parties, etc.) and Lee said he hopes to open an outdoor café when the weather warms up.

He said the 2d Stryker Cavalry Regiment Soldiers received a bad rap because of a few who caused trouble shortly after the unit’s arrival in Vilseck.

But Lee insists that not all of the Soldiers deserve to be tainted by the actions of a few.

He said most of the Soldiers were just looking for a place to have good, clean fun, and the new coffee house answers that need.

“When we first got here, the Soldiers indulged in alcohol,” he said. “We do have Soldiers that cause trouble, but there are good Soldiers who *want* to be good, and they deserve a place to go and relax and be with their friends.”

“The only place to go, really, is the movie theater, or the library, but they close. All of the other places Soldiers have are drinking establishments,” he said.

Lee said he believes that if the community provides a positive atmosphere for these Soldiers, they, in turn, will have a positive effect on their peers and community.

He plans to keep the Hospitality House open late—from lunch time until 10 p.m. on weekdays and until midnight on the weekends.

But for now, the only action going on in Bldg. 301 will be that of volunteers, rushing to get the Hospitality House ready for its guests to enjoy.

A grateful Lee said that the building has undergone drastic improvements, thanks to the help of the over 90 volunteers who showed up ready to work Nov. 18.

“I was only expecting to see about 20 or 30 people, but we had a great turn out,” said Chaplain Lee.

“(The volunteers) spent all day scrubbing walls, floors, etc., and by the end of the day it was shining. That’s how dedicated our community members are to making a special place for our Soldiers,” he said.

There is still time to help with this project.

If you’d like to donate your time or used furniture to the Hospitality House, e-mail Lee at samuel.lee@us.army.mil

What’s Happening

Grafenwoehr/Vilseck Briefs

Garrison motorcycle group meeting slated tomorrow

The garrison motorcycle group will meet at the Thai restaurant in Grafenwoehr as follows:
Tomorrow and Dec. 28

Call the inclement weather hotline for road conditions

■ Grafenwoehr: DSN 475-ROAD (7623) or CIV 09641-83-7623
■ Vilseck: DSN 476-3999 or CIV 09662-83-3999

Bank hours of operation

The Grafenwoehr Community Bank will be open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. today and Jan. 10 due to staff training. The bank will be closed Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Holiday wreath auction, luncheon slated Friday

The Vilseck Community & Spouses Club is sponsoring a Holiday Wreath Auction & Luncheon, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Friday in the Vilseck Chapel Fellowship Hall.

Come enjoy lunch, free childcare and the chance to bid on a holiday wreath for the house.

Last year some wreaths were decorated with Polish pottery, Americana, crystals, Christmas tree ornaments, etc.

The cost is \$7 for VCSC members, \$10 for non-members. The event is sponsored by VCSC.

For more info or to RSVP, contact tracey.lynn.jones@us.army.mil or visit www.vcscinfo.com

New Year’s Eve Mardi Gras set at bowling center

Spend your New Year’s Eve at the Grafenwoehr Bowling Center with a Mardi Gras Party Dec. 31 from 9 p.m. - 2 a.m.

The cost is \$99 for a group of eight people per lane. There will be prizes to be won, a free buffet and party accessories. Drinks are not included.

There must be a minimum of 14 lanes reserved. Please RSVP by Friday. Call DSN 475-6177 for information.

Post offices update hours, holiday mail guidelines

To accommodate holiday mailing needs the post offices (not the CMRs) in Vilseck, Grafenwoehr, and Hohenfels will extend their hours as follows through Dec. 22.:

Mon.-Wed. and Fri. 9 .am.-4 p.m.
Thurs. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
(Incoming mail delivery will continue on Saturdays until Jan. 6.)

Appointments for mailing can be made by calling your local APO at DSN 476-2581 for Vilseck, DSN 475-6333 for Grafenwoehr, and DSN 466-2887 for Hohenfels.

All post offices will be closed Dec. 24-25 for the Christmas holiday.

On Dec. 23 the post offices will be closed for outgoing mail, but incoming mail will be received and distributed to the community mail rooms.

The Community Mail Room 415 in Grafenwoehr will close Dec. 21 at 1 p.m. for their annual Christmas Party. All incoming mail received that day will be distributed prior to closure.

Express Mail Military Service is the fastest and most expensive service offered. The deadline for delivery by Christmas for EMMS is Dec. 18.

JMTC OCS Soldier packets due no later than Feb. 7

The 7th U.S. Army Joint Multinational Training Command Officer Candidate School Board will be conducted Feb. 22 at 9 a.m. in Bldg. 621, 1st floor.

Soldier packets are due to the G1 no later than Feb. 7.

Ensure all packets are thoroughly reviewed prior to submission.

Purchase your gift basket at the Virtual Commissary

The Virtual Commissary on www.commissaries.com went live for the purchase of gift baskets in 2005 but,

until recently, was unavailable to civilians overseas. Accessibility has now been provided so all authorized customers may click on Virtual Commissary to see approximately 100 gift baskets for purchase and mailing direct to both stateside s and APO/FPO locations.

General officer assignments

The Army chief of staff announces the assignment of the following general officers:

Brig. Gen. James C. Boozer Sr., deputy chief of staff, U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Germany, to assistant division commander (maneuver), 1st Armored Division, U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Germany.

Brig. Gen. Michael A. Ryan, assistant division commander (maneuver), 1st Armored Division, U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Germany, to deputy chief of staff for operations, Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps, Germany, with duty in Afghanistan with the International Security Assistance Force.

Graf Thrift Stop offering unique Christmas items

The Grafenwoehr Thrift Shop has a lot to offer for your Christmas shopping: Christmas decoration, lights, clothing for infants all the way to adults, and many more unique gifts.

Also available is a large variety of transformers for your Christmas lights.

The Grafenwoehr Thrift Shop will be closed Dec. 22 - Jan. 8.

Over 40 and female? Have you had a mammogram?

The curent recommendation for women over 40 years of age is to have a mammogram every two years. All it takes is a referral from your healthcare provider.

If you belong to the Vilseck Clinic, call CIV 09662-83-2804 / 2936 or DSN 476-2804 / 2936, ask to speak with a nurse, and the consult can be arranged over the telephone.

You will then need to visit the Tricare Service Center which will arrange your appointment on the German economy.

The POC is Lt. Col. Rick Martin at DSN 476-2014.

PAO, Bavarian News staff announce holiday schedule

The Bavarian News will skip the Dec. 27 issue for the holidays, and will resume publication Jan. 10.

Any items for submission should be sent to adriane.foss@us.army.mil by Jan. 2 for publication Jan. 10.

Readers can tune in to AFN radio for the movie listings in January.

The Garrison Grafenwoehr Public Affairs Office will be closed Dec. 25-29 for the holidays. In case you need emergency public affairs assistance, call CIV 0162-673-0670.

The Bavarian News office will be closed Dec. 18-22 and will resume normal operating hours Dec. 27.

Need help coping with deployment? We can help

Feeling the impact of Army life? Are you or your family struggling with deployment? Dealing with injuries or stress associated with combat? Having trouble connecting with family and friends? Not sure where to turn for help? Care managers can help!

Services Provided: Information & Referrals, Education for Soldiers & Families, Assistance with Marital and

Family Issues, Individual Counseling, Support Groups, Help Accessing Health Care.

Your Local Care Manager: Ginger Redden, LCSW, Vilseck/Grafenwoehr Care Manager, DSN 476-3324. Civ 09662-83-3324, ginger.redden@us.army.mil

IMCOM Travel Message

■ Avoid discussing travel plans and personal information.

■ Avoid using rank and military address on tickets, travel documents, and reservation.

■ Avoid travel in uniform and dress conservatively.

Flu shots available to TRICARE patients

In an effort to increase our campaign to get the Grafenwoehr community vaccinated, the Grafenwoehr Health Clinic is offering the influenza vaccine to all active duty, activated reserve component and all TRICARE beneficiaries.

Vaccinations are given on a walk-in basis. Clinic hours of operation are as follows:

Monday to Wednesday from 7 a.m. - 7 p.m., Thursdays from 1 - 7 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. - noon.

Graf Commissary closed for Christmas, New Year’s Day

The Grafenwoehr Commissary holiday closure schedule is as follows:

■ Closed Christmas Day
■ Closed Dec. 26
■ Closed New Year’s Day

Vilseck Thrift Shop closure

The Vilseck Thrift Shop will be closed for the holidays from Dec. 19 - Jan. 2.

The shop will re-open Jan. 3.

USAG G School Update

■ Motorists: Stop for school bus loading and unloading on post. Please do not drive through loading and unloading areas when busses and students are present. Signs are posted by schools.

Vehicles are ignoring signs and dangerously driving through loading areas. Please avoid these zones at the beginning and ending of school days.

Please drop your students off well away from bus zones.

■ Parents, teachers and students are encouraged to take the DODEA/DODDS

Customer Satisfaction survey now on-line at www.dodea.edu through Feb. 28. It takes about 10 minutes.

■ Dec. 14: GES Winter Concert
■ Dec. 21: Jan. 5: Winter Recess
■ Jan. 8: School Resumes

Commissary gift certificates ready for the holidays

All DeCA Europe commissaries carry \$25 certificates and charge a \$1 handling fee per certificate. Denominations from \$5 to \$100 are available at www.commissaries.com.

Units wishing to buy a large number of certificates or a variety of denominations for holiday presentations should contact gretchenh@certifi_checks.com. The handling fee is omitted when using this process, but a shipping fee is added.

Dragoons Inn closed Tuesday through Dec. 25

The Dragoons Inn will be closed Tuesday through Dec. 25. The Stryker Inn, Bldg. 603, will remain open during this time.

Hohenfels Briefs

Repairs cause temporary CDC closure Dec. 18-22

During Dec. 18-22, the Main CDC will be closed for boiler replacement.

We apologize for the inconvenience, but the hourly care will not be offered during this time at the annex. Children from the main building will be relocated to the annex.

Parents of infant children, should see management about care for your children.

Cub Scouts seeking first through fifth graders

It is not too late to join in the Cub Scouting fun! There is room for first through fifth graders.

For more information, visit www.geocities.com/cubscoutsin_hohenfels.

If you cannot find what you are looking for at the Pack 303 site, contact Andrea Neill at cubscoutsinhohenfels@yahoo.com.

APO offering extended hours through holidays

The APO will be closed Dec. 22 from 1 - 5 p.m. for the annual Christmas party. Normal hours will resume Dec. 26.

The APO will have extended holiday hours through Dec. 22.

Saturday operations will end on Saturday. Hours of operation are as follows:

Mon., Tues., Wed., and Fri. from 9 a.m.- 4 p.m.
Thurs. from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sat. from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Enjoy cultural exchange with Hohenfels’ Kontakt

Kontakt Hohenfels is a German-American (and other international members) friendship club with fun events, recreation, education, community service, and networking opportunities.

It’s a cultural exchange club for meeting new people and learning about another culture and language, based upon respect and tolerance without regard to differences in race, politics, religion, or ideology.

Kontakt is for people of all ages who care about working to develop international cultural relations. The club needs individual members who are willing to work and contribute ideas, skills, time, and talents while growing with the opportunities.

Upcoming Events:
Dec. 20 – Christmas Stammtisch at Josef’s at 7 p.m. Bring a white elephant gift to join in a fun exchange.

****Movie night will be determined by movie schedule.**

If you have questions about any of the events or club membership, contact the public affairs liaison at DSN 466-4294 or CIV 09472-83-4294.

FRG child care relief

The CDC (Bldg. 44) will offer evening child care for FRG meetings on the second Wednesday of every month from 6 - 8 p.m.

To reserve a space, contact your FRG leader today.

Free training offered on “Computer Thursdays”

The Turnbull Memorial Library will

offer free computer classes every Thursday during the month of January.

Learn new skills or brush up on old ones. Classes include:

Jan. 4 - Basic Computer & Internet Skills

Jan. 11 - Microsoft Word

Jan. 18 - Microsoft Excel

Jan. 25 - Microsoft PowerPoint

For more information, call DSN 466-1740.

Pay POV license fee by credit card at TMP station

Customers may now pay the \$10 POV drivers license fee by credit card at the TMP Drivers Testing Station, Bldg. 9, during normal duty hours.

Mind & Body Class Update

If no one e-mails or signs up prior to Friday, the Mind and Body class will not take place.

For more information, contact the Post Gym at DSN 466-2883.

Chaplain Happenings

■ Chaplain Gail Porter, the Family Life chaplain, sponsors two lunches every month at The Zone community club.

One is for moms in the community, and one is for dads. The focus of the complimentary lunches is to bring moms together with moms and dads together with dads in an informal atmosphere.

A topic relating to parenting is presented during part of the lunch by various speakers. The next Moms Lunch at The Zone is Jan. 16, and the next Dads Lunch at The Zone is Jan. 30.

Call DSN 466-4796 / CIV 09472-834795 or e-mail gail.porter@us.army.mil for reservations or information.

■ Club Beyond always has something planned for Hohenfels youth: On Wednesdays is The Mug Coffee House for Teens in high school or junior high and on Thursdays is the H2O Youth Group for Teens in high school or junior high.

Weekend activities are also periodically planned. Call Chris at DSN 466-4793 / CIV 09472-834793 or e-mail christopher.s.howard@us.army.mil.

■ Frank and Ursula Campos of the Protestant Congregation facilitate a young adult bible study Tuesday evenings.

Bible study and a home cooked meal is combined with a relaxingd atmosphere for young adults who have graduated high school and are working in the community. Call Chaplain Bradford Baumann at DSN 466-1570 for information.

■ The Protestant Women of the Chapel meets every Tuesday for fellowship, food, and bible study at the Hilltop Chapel Center.

Child care is provided. A bible study is also held Wednesdays at the Hilltop. Call DSN 466-1570 for more information.

■ The Catholic Women of the Chapel meets every Thursday at the Hilltop Chapel Center. Call DSN 466-1570 for more information.

■ The wider Hohenfels community meets at the Chaplain Family Life and Youth Center about two Fridays a month for a play day with children 0-3 and their parents.

Call coordinator Cheryl Carter at ACS EFMP at DSN 466-2083 / CIV 09472-832083 for information.

Tae kwon do cancelled

Tae kwon do class will be canceled from Saturday to Jan. 7.

Dental Assistant Program
Grafenwoehr and Vilseck offices

Applications are now available at your local Red Cross office.

Timeline:
Dec. 31, 2006 – Applications due (No applications will be accepted after this date)
January 2007 – Interviews will be conducted—(Specific dates not yet available)
February 2007 – Program to begin (Specific dates not yet available)

Training program information:

- Mandatory 64 hours of classroom training will be conducted the first two weeks of the program.
- Additional 300 hours of clinical experience will be required.
- Minimum of 12-15 hours per week is required.

GARRISON CHAPEL
HOLIDAY SCHEDULE
December 2006

Dec. 17 - Protestant Children Christmas Play at 5 p.m., Vilseck Chapel
Dec. 24 - Protestant Worship at 10:30 a.m., Grafenwoehr Chapel
Dec. 24 - Protestant Christmas Eve Service at 7 p.m., Grafenwoehr Chapel
Dec. 24 - Catholic Christmas Eve Mass at 7 p.m., Vilseck Chapel
Dec. 24 - General Protestant Liturgical Combined Service with Carols and Communion at 5 p.m., Vilseck Chapel
Dec. 25 - Christmas Day Service at 9 a.m., Grafenwoehr Chapel
Dec. 31 - New Year's Eve Mass at 9 a.m., Grafenwoehr Chapel
New Year's Eve Mass at 11 a.m., Vilseck Chapel

For more information call DSN 475-1370 for Grafenwoehr and DSN 476-1570 for Vilseck.

The German Christmas pickle legend: Fact, fiction, or clever marketing tool?

by MARTINA BIAS
Bavarian News Food & Culture columnist

Are you familiar with the legend of the German Christmas pickle? Chances are that if you are American you might have heard about it, but if you are German, you most likely have no idea what I am talking about.

I had never heard of the famous German Christmas pickle either until I was told all about it by an American friend.

You can imagine her surprise (and my curiosity) when she realized that I had been born and raised in Germany, yet had never had the privilege of experiencing the joy of the Christmas pickle tradition.

For those of you who have also missed out on the pleasure of the Christmas Pickle legend,



The origin of the German Christmas pickle legend remains a mystery.

here is the full story:

A very old Christmas Eve tradition in Germany is to hide a pickle (ornament) deep in the branches of the family Christmas tree.

The parents hang this prized decoration after all the other ornaments are in place. In the morning, the child who finds the pickle ornament first will receive an extra gift from St. Nikolaus.

The first adult who finds it is said to have good luck throughout the next year.

Major flaws

But there is one major problem with the story - namely anything and everything to do with German tradition!

First of all, St. Nikolaus is not the gift giver on Christmas Eve, the Christkind (literally: Christ Child) is. St. Nikolaus gives presents to Germany boys and girls on Dec. 6.

Secondly, German children do not open their presents on Christmas morning as do Americans, but on Christmas Eve.

The search for truth

Puzzled by the inconsistency with German tradition, I searched for the origin of the legend and came across several possibilities:

The most sentimental one came from the family of John Lower, a Soldier who fought in the American Civil War.

Lower, who was born in Bavaria in 1842, became a prisoner of war and was sent to a



photos courtesy of www.br-online.de

These colorful vegetable Christmas ornaments take the legend of the famous Christmas pickle a step further.

prison in Andersonville, Ga. In poor health and starving, he begged a guard for just one pickle before he died. The guard took pity on him and found him a pickle.

According to family legend, John said that the pickle – by the grace of God – gave him the mental and physical strength to live on.

Once he was reunited with his family, he began the tradition of hiding a pickle in the Christmas tree.

Spanish version

Another tale goes back to the medieval times and tells of two Spanish boys. (Why were they Spanish and not German? Who knows, but I digress.) The boys were traveling home from boarding school for the holidays. When they stopped at an inn for the night, the innkeeper, a

mean and evil man, stuffed the boys into a pickle barrel.

That evening, St. Nikolaus stopped at the same inn. He became aware of the boy's plight, tapped the pickle barrel with his staff, and the boys were magically freed.

The third version comes from the eastern region of Germany. Lauscha is a little town famous for its Christmas balls industry.

One day, one of their factories received a huge order for green ornaments that would be shipped to the United States. Unfortunately, something went terribly wrong with the machines and the ornaments came out misshapen and wrinkled.

When the mistake was discovered, it was too late to start all over, so a clever sales person came up with the "Legend of the German Christmas Pickle" and sent it along with all the green ornaments. It was such a great seller that it spread throughout the U.S and eventually back to Europe.

A pickle of a story

The last and most cynical explanation of the German Christmas pickle was offered to me by an older West German gentleman who suggested that the tradition came from the generations of East Germans who may have had nothing more than pickles to decorate their Christmas trees after World War II.

My personal opinion about the pickle story is that it probably originated in the same place as German chocolate cake.

Uh, ... after all, how many coconut trees have you seen during your stay in Germany?

Have you ever wondered why Germans do certain things? I welcome your questions and comments. E-mail me at martina.bias@us.army.mil, and I may be able to address your suggestions in a future column.



To add more variety to a vegetable-themed tree, you can add carrots or tomatoes for color.

Enjoy Bavaria's favorite New Year's Eve cuisine

by MARTINA BIAS
Bavarian News Food & Culture columnist

New Year's Eve is the time of year when Americans have night-long parties to usher in the next year.

Germans do the same, and I will share a special food with you today that is a favorite midnight snack at Bavarian celebrations.

A dish of boiled Bratwurst is often served as a snack to sustain partygoers throughout the region.

The names given to these local specialties vary from Blaue Zipfel (literally blue ends or corners) to Saure Wurst (literally sour sausage).

The name Blaue Zipfel or Blaue Wurst may have several origins.

The obvious reason to call them blue sausages is that they are boiled in a vinegar/wine water which turns them a slightly bluish color.

Another theory has to do with the fact that "to be drunk" in German is called "blau sein" (to be blue).

Therefore this snack might be served as a "neutralizer" after alcohol consumption, or the next morning if you are suffering from the after-effects of a night of indulgence.

Blaue Zipfel is also a popular "Brotzeit" (a

small meal anytime), served with a slice of German Rye bread.

All kinds of bratwurst from fine to coarse can be used, and of course, each region will tell you that their version is the best.

Since the sausages have to steep in the "Sud" (broth made from water, onions, vinegar, white wine, laurel leaves, pepper corns, whole cloves and juniper berries) for preferably several hours, this recipe is perfect for your crock-pot and frees you up to join your guests who can serve themselves at their own leisure.

Our family prefers the fine textured bratwursts, but some Americans might find the taste sensation and texture an aquired taste.

Guten Appetit!

Blaue Zipfel

5 large onions, sliced

1-2 laurel leaves

3 whole cloves

2 carrots, sliced or in strips

several black peppercorns

1 quart wine vinegar or cider vinegar

1 quart good quality dry wine

(Bavarians prefer those from the Franconian region)

1 quart water



2 tsp. sugar

2 tsp. salt

8 pairs (or 16) bratwurst

Combine all ingredients except the bratwurst in a large pot.

Bring to a boil and simmer for 5 – 15 minutes.

Add sausages and steep for at least 30

minutes. The longer they are allowed to sit in the broth, the better the flavor. Most people say that they taste the best after about 3-4 hours.

Serve with a little broth and onions in deep bowls and offer German bread alongside. Cool slightly.

Yield: 8 servings

"Blaue Zipfel" is a Bratwurst dish Bavarians serve as a midnight snack when partying, or as a mid-morning "Brotzeit."

Try something different ! If you like to cook and would like an authentic German recipe, e-mail the Bavarian News Food & Culture columnist for a recipe.

Wondering how to recreate a delicious dish you ate in a village Gasthof or neighborhood cafe? Let us know. We'd like to feature the recipe in a future issue.

Just e-mail us at martina.bias@us.army.mil. Guten Appetit!

Vilseck varsity loses first game of season, rebounds following night with 46-43 win

Jordan, Najdawi, Turner promising players for season

by ADRIANE FOSS
Editor

The Vilseck High School Varsity Falcons lost their first official (non-conference) game of the season, 43-56, against Ansbach High School Dec. 1 at the Grafenwoehr Field House.

"We started strong thanks to our defensive pressure," said Head Coach Rick Ritter, "but in the end we could not respond to their pressure. Way too many turnovers and poor rebounding cost us the game."

Ritter said the team didn't have enough practice time with the school gym being under construction, and "this showed in the first game."

Despite the loss, Ritter said he thinks the team will be very competitive against their USAREUR-wide competition this season.

"We look to be a deeper team with more experience," he said.

That experience could come in the form of lead players like junior Kollin Jordan (#34) and sophomore Kyed Najdawi (#43).

"Kollin Jordan has developed into a solid post player. He and the 6'5 Najdawi should be able to find a lot of success in the paint," said Ritter, who is in his seventh year as a head basketball coach.

"Both feature good mid-range jumpers and the ability to finish," he said. "(Senior) Ronnie Turner (#21) has also stepped up into a leadership role on the court, as evident from his 20 points in the Ansbach victory (Dec. 2).

Historically, the Falcons have an average record, winning some years, losing others, which is typical of transient military teams.

The Falcons redeemed their first game loss to Ansbach the following night when they nudged past the team for a 46-43 victory Dec. 2.

Simply put, "they outplayed us Friday, we outplayed them Saturday," said Ritter. "We were able to correct some of our mistakes the next day and get the win at Ansbach."

Standout players for the weekend were Ronnie Turner, netting 30 points, and Kollin Jordan, who scored a combined 24 points during both games.

Ritter said he appreciated all of the home support Friday, "especially from the V-Unit (student pep squad).



(Top) The 2006 Varsity Falcons take a time-out before their 43-56 loss to Ansbach Dec. 1.

(Far left) The VHS student pep squad, along with a large crowd of community members, showed their support, attending the team's first game. Pictured is Rebecca Linka.

(Left) Kollin Jordan scored a combined 24 points during the two-game weekend against Ansbach.

AAFES, Marvel offering military-only comics

American Forces Press Service

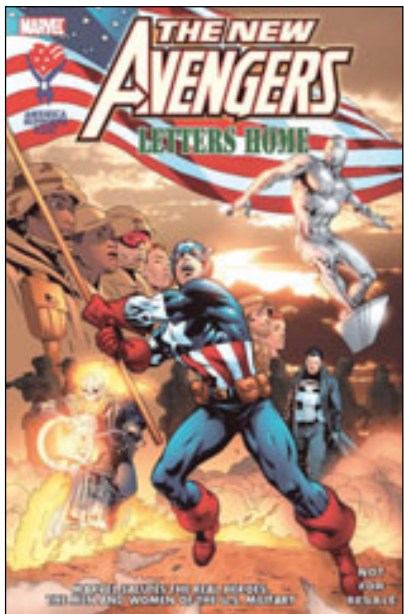
Just in time for the holiday season, Marvel Comics' "The New Avengers" and the Army and Air Force Exchange Service have teamed up to bring troops stationed around the world another free, military-exclusive comic book.

Marvel Comics, a division of Marvel Enterprises, Inc., is a member of America Supports You, a Defense Department program highlighting ways Americans and the corporate sector support the nation's servicemembers.

"The New Avengers: Letters Home" is scheduled to arrive in U.S. exchanges around Dec. 20 and overseas, including the 53 BX/PX facilities throughout operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, shortly thereafter. It's the fourth installment of the military-only comic book series.

"Due to their limited availability, collectors have historically shown great interest in these special AAFES/Marvel Comics editions," Army Col. Max Baker, AAFES chief of staff, said. "If the past is any indicator, 'The New Avengers: Letters Home' issue should go quickly."

Available exclusively at AAFES stores, the newest issue once again features Marvel's superhero Captain America, who, because his regular supporting cast is away for the holidays, is joined by Silver Surfer,



The New Avengers: Letters Home

Ghost Rider and special guest, The Punisher.

When Hydra takes over a military communications satellite, the superheroes spring into action to ensure troops' e-mail messages to loved ones make their way home.

Because of the highly collectible nature and the anticipated demand for the 36-page comic, AAFES officials advise that "The New Avengers: Letters Home" is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

YS prices increase, discounts available

by RACHEL HARTMAN

Youth Sports Director, Hohenfels

As of Nov. 1, 2006 Youth Sports prices have increased to the following rates:

■ Category A (soccer, flag football, and cheerleading) - \$36

■ Category B (baseball, softball, basketball, and field hockey) - \$46

■ Category C (lacrosse, roller hockey, and tackle football) - \$84

All prices are per youth and season. Multiple child enrollments receive 10 percent off, and free enrollment is

offered to children whose parents coach during a Youth Sports season.

"Now where does our money go?" This must be one of the most frequently asked questions within Child and Youth Services' Youth Sports.

Well, to make it simple, the funds are dispersed into the following areas:

■ certifying/paying Youth Sports officials

■ certifying volunteer coaches (CPR, First Aid, and NYSCA - National Alliance for Youth Sports)

■ purchasing awards, equipment, and uniforms.

And don't forget the field maintenance, purchasing office supplies, and some staff salaries.

Youth Sports is subsidized by the U.S. Army, and without the help the Army provides, Youth Sports could not operate the exceptional program we offer.

Youth Sports has much to offer. If you are new to the community or would just like additional information on youth sign-ups or volunteering, call DSN 466-2488.



Music in our schools

Members of the USAFE Band performed a musical concert Nov. 15 for students at Grafenwoehr Elementary School. The band explained the importance of music in today's military and our daily lives.

Courtesy photo

Community Snapshots



photo by Gerry Arbios

Soldiers train on how to safely exit a car after a rollover during the Own the Edge Winter Safety Day Nov. 16 in Hohenfels. More than 400 Soldiers and civilians took part in the day's activities. Attendees learned how to react to skidding on ice and were given information on everything from how alcohol affects the body to how to help prevent suicides.



photo by Sue Bluhm

Community member Juleigh Fairley makes one last check before handing over her Christmas packages to Eric Sampract at the Grafenwoehr Post Office. The deadline for Priority Mail was Monday. The deadline for Express Mail Military Service is Dec. 18 to ensure packages arrive before Christmas.



staff photo by Adriane Foss

Grafenwoehr Child Development Center teachers Irmi Klatz-Alvis (center) and Tonik Joseph (at left) read stories and discuss the importance of reading to their class Friday during this year's Scholastic Read for 2007 event. Several parent-volunteers visited the school throughout the day to read to students. Mrs. Claus also paid a special visit to the facility.



photo by Sue Bluhm

Contractor Gregg Knight and his wife Sharon square away their packages at the Grafenwoehr Post Office before the Dec. 11 Priority Mail deadline. The Express Mail Military Service deadline is Monday.

Rumsfeld reflects on accomplishments, highlights at Pentagon helm

by DONNA MILES

American Forces Press Service

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld Dec. 8 told members of the Defense Department that he will leave his office proud to have served with them and of what they have accomplished and inspired by their dedication, patriotism and sacrifice.

Rumsfeld, speaking to hundreds of military, civilian and contract employees at the Pentagon during his 42nd town hall session, reflected on his past six years in the top Pentagon post and the satisfaction he's found leading the department.

"Every day, in one way or another, I have seen the strength of the men and women in uniform and the dedication of the many thousands who serve here — military and civilian — who do their jobs, knowing that theirs is the essential business of protecting a nation (and) a people," he said.

"You do so knowing that you contribute directly to the safety of millions of people: people you will never meet, whose names you will never know," said Rumsfeld.

"I leave this office proud to have served with you," he said, "(and) proud of what this great institution has achieved," during what he called one of the most challenging periods in DoD's 59-year history.

"If there is one thing I wish could be more widely known, it is the

miracles that the men and women of this department perform every day," Rumsfeld said. He rattled off examples of DoD's accomplishments during his time as secretary, including:

- Supporting military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan while putting pressure on terrorists around the globe;

- Delivering aid to millions of people affected by devastating natural disasters: the tsunami in the Indian Ocean, the earthquake in Pakistan, and Hurricane Katrina along the U.S. Gulf Coast;

- Training counterterrorism forces in the Philippines and Horn of Africa;

- Putting in place an initial missile defense system to protect Americans from rogue states;

- Establishing the new Northern Command to better protect the homeland;

- Standing guard over some of the world's most dangerous terrorists, at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, while suffering what he called "grossly uninformed and irresponsible charges in the media and from almost every quarter;"

- Overseeing the largest domestic base realignment and closure in DoD's history;

- Implementing the most sweeping changes in the U.S. global force posture since World War II while transforming from a Cold War

posture to one suited to the 21st century;

- Putting in place a new National Security Personnel System for civilian employees that adds flexibility in hiring and assignments and links pay to performance;

- Bolstering special operations forces to meet new demands of the global struggle against violent extremists; and

- Transitioning the Army from a division-based force to a more agile and more capable combat brigade force.

"Each of you here in this room and listening to (this broadcast on) The Pentagon Channel has played a part in one or more of these accomplishments (and) endeavors," Rumsfeld said. "You can look at all you have done here in this past period with great pride."

Rumsfeld reflected on some of his personal high and low points during his second term as secretary of defense.

He remembered attending the inauguration of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, the first democratically elected leader in his country's 5,000-year history.

Amid the historic significance of the event, Rumsfeld said he was particularly moved to watch young Afghan girls sing at the ceremony and hear reports of children flying kites in celebration. He noted that both acts

were forbidden under the Taliban repressive rule.

Rumsfeld acknowledged the Iraqis who "through it all, believe their future is bright," and who "are working to forget something they have never had before: a free (and) representative country."

He recalled the emotions he experienced meeting with families of the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team in Alaska after DoD extended their loved ones' deployment in Iraq beyond their initial one-year tour and the green woven bracelet he received from a military wife that he wore until the unit returned.

Rumsfeld paid tribute to the "great American heroes" who have become a part of history during his tenure as defense secretary.

He specifically noted Army Sgt. 1st Class Paul Ray Smith, who posthumously received the Medal of Honor, and Marine Cpl. Jason Dunham, whose family will accept his Medal of Honor during ceremonies in January.

While remembering the highlights of his Pentagon days, Rumsfeld also reflected on some of the most difficult times as well.

He noted how angry he felt hearing "irresponsible comments by some who tried to sully the image of the courageous and dedicated men and women in uniform who keep America safe."

He recalled how stunned he felt when he learned of abuse at the Abu Ghraib detention facility in Iraq.

But even amid that painful time, Rumsfeld said, he was impressed by the determination so many people demonstrated as he tried to find out how the incident could have happened and how to "make it right."

He told the audience to take comfort in knowing that "your Department of Defense eventually demonstrated to the world how our democracy deals openly and decisively with such egregious wrongdoing."

Rumsfeld told the audience that they, like he, will carry their own different memories with them when they leave the Department of Defense.

Some of those memories will be of hard, behind-the-scenes work that goes unnoticed by many, he said.

But he urged DoD employees to always remember the important role they have played in their country's future.

"But let there be no doubt," Rumsfeld said.

"Each of you and the future generations of Americans," said Rumsfeld, "as well as the future generations of Iraqis and Afghans, will be able to look back on these past six years as a time of enormous challenge, of historic consequence and of solid accomplishment."